Destination China: Fleming, Bullock join 800 education leaders to gain firsthand knowledge of The Peopleâ

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Program Seeks to Build, Expand Chinese Foreign Language Programs in Local U.S. Schools

REDMOND, Ore. â€” Superintendent Vickie Fleming and Redmond High School Principal Jon Bullock are among 800 U.S. educators who will travel to China on June 24 for a one-week tour in an effort to build and expand Chinese language programs in U.S. schools.

In its second year, the Chinese Bridge Delegation aims to expose school decision-makers to the rich history and culture of a country whose language is the most widely spoken in the world. Ultimately, the sponsors who take part in this program aspire to foster a better understanding of Chinese culture and fluency in the language among U.S. students.

"I am looking forward to a firsthand view of the global economy at work,â€• said Fleming. â€œSpeaking Chinese fluently, as well as other foreign languages, will provide our students with the opportunity to succeed in a rapidly changing world. It is a new 'basic skill' and we must meet the challenge."

With more than 800 delegates scheduled for this yearâ€™s trip, participation has doubled since last year. A variety of educators, including teachers, administrators and language coordinators, will begin their tour in Beijing and then travel to other cities and provinces where they will meet with local education commissions. Participants will have an opportunity to talk with Chinese education leaders, build sister schools and network with other U.S. educators who are working toward the same goal of offering Chinese language programs to their students.

Beyond cultural enrichment, the trip will also provide incentives and strategies for educators to return to the United States better equipped to support the growth of Chinese language and culture programs in their own districts. Chinese is the national language of the more than 1.3 billion inhabitants of China and millions more ethnic Chinese around the world. While more than 200 million Chinese schoolchildren are studying Englishâ€”often begun as early as the second gradeâ€”experts estimate no more than 50,000 U.S. students are studying Chinese.

â€œIf we truly are to prepare our students for competition in a growing world economy, it is critical for us to understand how the power of the Chinese economic influence is driven by its education system,â€• said Bullock. â€œMy hope is to learn more about the Chinese education system and discover ways in which we might be able to begin a Chinese language program that would better prepare our students for success.â€•

The Chinese Bridge Delegation is sponsored by Hanban, Chinaâ€™s Office of Chinese Language Council

International, in partnership with the College Board, the Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools, the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages, the National Association of District Supervisors of Foreign Languages and Chinese Consulates in the United States.

In April 2006, the College Board and Hanban announced the formation of a partnership to build and expand Chinese language programs in U.S. schools. In addition to the Chinese Bridge Delegation, the partnership features other programs intended to help educators promote Chinese language and culture programs. For more information about these programs, visit www.collegeboard.com/k12chinese.

*Destination China: Fleming, Bullock join 800 education leaders to gain firsthand knowledge of The Peopleâ€™s Republic of China by Bend_Weekly_News_*